



The Compassionate Friends of Northwest Houston Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

SEPTEMBER 2016

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20
Spring, Texas 77379

We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Sept. 13th)

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our meeting room.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.





Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1961- David Hendricks, II, Son of David Hendricks
1965- Sandra ReNae Southerland, Daughter of Vivian Southerland, Sister of Tim
1989 & 1991- Dillon & Alex Gussie, Sons of Debbie Benavides
1971- Brian D. Klaus, Son of Johnny & Ginger Klaus
1977- Matthew Brown, Son of Cathy Brown
1978-Kenneth Roberts, Son of Brenda Johnson
1993-Brittany Idabell Miller, Daughter of George & Kathy Miller
1981-Nicholas (Nick) Skala, Son of Judy Skala
1955-Deborah Levy, Daughter of Pat Morgan
1986-Evan Michael Smith, Nephew of Kaye Larberg
1960-Jeff Walker, Brother of Stephanie Thrift
1984-Julee Ann Serna, Daughter of Virginia Serna
1982- "Bo" Jared Valdez, Son of Irma & James Valdez
1990-Shannon Stovall, Daughter of Charlie & Liz Stovall
1991-Matthew Allen, Son of Jay & Linda Allen
2003-Ryan Moody, Son of Gloria Moody
1985-Ryan Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
1961- Donna Weston, Daughter of Roberta Ware
1991-Brayon Molden, Step Son of Reagan Molden
1990-Wolfgang Jones, Son of Phillip Jones
2015-Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neelley
1996-Christopher "Cole" Knight, Son of Ken & Jan Knight
2008-Jacob Isaac Reyes, Son of Lauren Reyes

The Birth and Death of our loved ones are always very difficult. Please remember to include these families in your thoughts and prayers on their very difficult day.

***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me
during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you.***

I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere.

I love you.

Today, in your honor,

I celebrate Life.



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

SEPTEMBER ANGEL DATES

2003-Jeff Costin, Son of Carol and Richard Costin
2009- Kevin Thrift, Son of Stephanie & Tim Thrift
2007- Stephen Cage, Son of Melanie Cage
2008- Patrick Williams, Son of Poppy & Steve Williams
2003- Geoffrey Lynn Meier, Son of Gary Meier
2002- Adrian Jay, Son of Helen Jay
2003- Justin Fletcher, Son of Karen Fletcher
2009- Jeff Shinsky, Son of Margaret Butler
2002- Aaron James O'Neil, Son of Lisa Thompson
2006- Amanda Jane Franklin, Daughter of Jane Draycott
2008- Terry Shannon Pauling, Son of Howard & Jean Pauling
2006- Marlinda Raschke, Daughter of Gloria Raschke, Sister of Kevin Raschke
2008- Christine Marie Frazier, Daughter of Steven R. Frazier
2011- Grant Goodwin, Son of Linda Foraker
2011-Lucy Gale Sanders, Daughter of Steve & Jackie Sanders
2012-Charlotte Caldwell, Daughter of Jason & Rebecca Caldwell
2012-John Steven Sims, Son of Marilyn Sims
2004-Zack "Moose" Triplett, Son of Trina Cash
2013-Aimee Hurst, Daughter of Doris Odell
2014-Aaron Fontaine, Son of Doug & Tina Fontaine
2015-Mark Cook, Son of Bill & Joanne Cook
2013-Jacob Isaac Reyes, Son of Lauren Reyes

My Angel Day

Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day
From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon
But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory
Far beyond the moon

Today you'll perform your loving rituals
And do your best to keep my memory aware
Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us
For I am both here and there

Donald Moyers
TCF Galveston County, TX

CHAPTER NEWS

Congratulations! Houston Northwest Chapter on the 35th. anniversary of our TCF charter (March 24, 1981). To all our bereaved parents and family members who have come to our chapter seeking comfort and support. We wish you peace on this long and endless grief journey. Thank you for supporting our chapter.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, September 13th at 7pm. Please remember to bring a picture/photo of your child or sibling to the meeting to share with the group.

There will be a meeting on Thursday, September 15th at 7pm. for parents having lost an infant, toddler, or have had a miscarriage or stillbirth. Contact Julie Joiner at 832-724-4299 for more information.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.

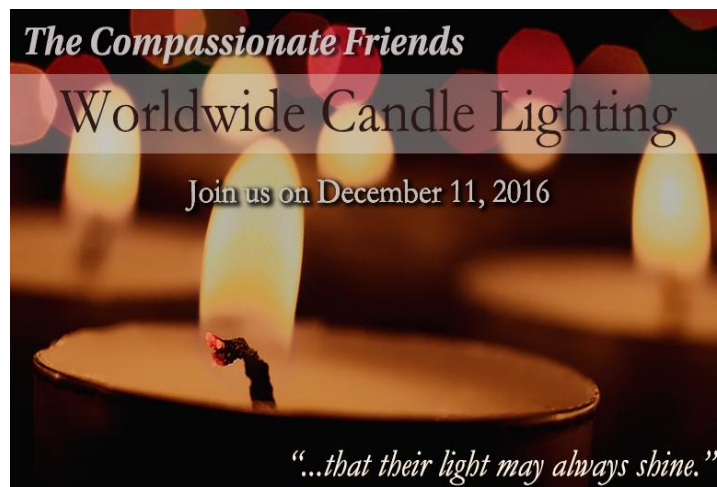
To our newest members—we offer our warmest welcome. We welcome **Lauren Reyes she lost her son Jacob in 2013** . If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

As our TCF Credo says, *"We come from different walks of life..."*, but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

Mark Your Calendar For:

(more information to follow)



SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

This is a poem Lucy wrote shortly before her passing. It was a requirement for school and actually spent a great deal of time even using a tutor to help her get it perfect. Little did we know 2 weeks later the words spoke so loud.

*Steve and Jackie Sanders
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter
In memory of our daughter, Lucy Gale Sanders*

I am From...

I am from polishing silver,
from cold snow and brick fire places.
I am from the big hill in the front yard,
(Green and Plush,
It sounded like laughter.)
I am from blue grass,
homemade homes,
where foundations were built with heart and soul,
outlasting time and decay.

I am from "Go Big Blue" and ballet,
from peanut butter cookies, mason jars, and dip cans,
I'm from the "red-rovers-come-over"
and the "three-strikes-your-out,"
from Andover, summer to winter.
I am from little school houses,
with juice boxes,
and sticky gummy bears.

I am from white fences and birdfeeders,
fishing with poppy and everything fried.
From Church bells ringing,
and saying grace.
From the cancer, oxygen tanks, and lung tubes,
that took my Gaga,
The hearts that were trampled with grief.
From a place deep in my heart,
that echoes.
I am from these memories kept.

Lucy Gale Sanders
01/19/1995 - 09/11/2011

Thanks Steve and Jackie for sharing Lucy's beautiful poem with us.

There's Help —The Power In Talking

One of the most valuable things you can do is talk it out with a good listener. We now know that the stress level of bereaved people can be cut in half when they talk about the death to someone who does not judge or advise them.

Having someone as a backboard to hear your thoughts bounced off is the greatest gift you can receive. Too often, everyone wants to make you feel better, so they try to advise rather than listen.

Remember, repeating your story is healthy. Talking about your loved one, the illness and/or death, works like a sponge. Each time you talk, a little more of the pain is squeezed out and the need to talk about the incident becomes less. It's as if your story is being framed within your mind. Soon you can hang it on the wall. You'll always have it there to look at whenever you want, but you no longer have to carry the whole thing around with you and be burdened and controlled by the past.

There will be times when no one is around to listen. You'll need to do something different. Talk into a tape recorder. Keep a journal to write down your thoughts and feelings. Buy a journal just for this purpose. Select a color that you like and write when there's no one around and you need to talk. Talk out loud as you write if it makes you feel better.

Write a letter to your loved one who died. This can be a very powerful process. Share your thoughts and feelings. Pour them out on paper. You may feel emotionally drained afterwards. If so, nurture yourself. Examples: Wrap yourself in a blanket and take a nap, watch a movie, or hold and/or pet the family pet. You may even find it helpful to write a letter back from the person who died.

Others have found that just talking aloud or into a tape recorder was helpful. Some stand in front of the mirror to talk. As a friend once said to me, "Don't worry about talking out loud to yourself. It's good to have a conversation with an intelligent person." However you do it, remember: "Talking it out is one of the best medicines of all."

While some people won't want to listen to you, you'll also find they can say some really stupid things. Offer them suggestions for kinder, more compassionate words they can use with bereaved people. It will help them to help you and others more effectively because some people really want to help, but just do not know how.

When you go to a support group you will find others who understand. You will meet other mourners with similar feelings and problems. They can provide tremendous emotional affirmation. Why not come to the next meeting? This group of bereaved parents listens, even to those who say nothing. Come, listen, share if you want to, receive love and compassion. You do not have to walk alone. Come walk with us.

Extracted from *More Than Surviving—Caring for Yourself While You Grieve*, by Kelly Osmont, MSW
Reprinted from TCF Cape Fear Chapter, Wilmington NC August 2003





EXPOSING MYTHS OF TERRORISM'S IMPACT

By: Sherri Mandell

This is an excerpt from an article written by Sherri Mandell. Sherri's son Koby, was 13 years old when he was murdered on May 8, 2001, in Israel by Arab terrorists. Sherri and her husband have created the Koby Mandell Foundation, to provide therapy and activities for victims of terrorism. And Sherri is the author of "The Road to Resilience" and "The Blessing of a Broken Heart."

There is no closure. There is no graduation certificate for grief. Somebody asked a friend of mine when I was three years into mourning, "Isn't she over it?" No. There is no closure. There is what I call "disclosure." Survivors can find new friends, new interests and a new mission.

Victims' families don't move on. They move *with*. With the memories. With the pain. With the love. And with the will to survive and bear witness.

Trauma isn't only in the mind. It resides in the body. Survivors have to work with their bodies to deal with the pain.

Survivors don't overcome. They *become*. Somebody else. Because the person they were before would never have had the capacity to deal with this emotional horror. In every trauma, there is a shattering and an opportunity for rebirth.

The survivors don't need to be distracted from the pain. If they don't enter the pain, they will never exit it. What they need is support.

Don't tell the survivors to "be strong." "Guard your strength." I think that's more important. It means taking care of yourself, protecting yourself and knowing what is good and bad for you.

It is not good to be alone. The community must help families of terrorist acts and other forms of violence.

There is a difference between fate and destiny. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik said our job in this world is to transform fate into destiny. Even living with atrocity can be directed toward a sense of meaning and purpose.

Those who lose loved ones to terrorism and other acts of violence are not only victims. They are survivors. The way they survive will determine their own children's health. As studies of second and third generation Holocaust survivors have shown, trauma can be passed on if it is not processed. This is sometimes referred to as secondhand or vicarious trauma.

The pain and grief, the trauma and stress, create ripples that affect everyone, whether they know us personally or have watched the tragedy on TV. Those who witness trauma (even on the screen) may be at risk for vicarious trauma disorders with the danger of higher stress levels and even PTSD. When terror and violence hurt some of us, they hurt all of us.

That Fateful Day 9-11
Sharing to remember the victims and families of 9-11

**I can't forget that fateful day,
Innocent people, taken away.
A sadness filled me up inside,
Emotions that I could not hide.
Tears, they came, sadness too,
All my emotions, pouring through.
Time will heal , so I was told,
but time could never fill this hole.
In my heart there is a place,
They're always there, keeping us safe.
It's filled with love and happy times,
It's never dark, their light it shines.
In heaven now they do reside,
To watch over us, stand at our side.
I can't forget that fateful day,
but in my heart they will always stay.**

Written by Dave Hedges



Tears on Their Shoulders

Thank God for friends. Can you imagine your life without your close friends? I have never been one to have a great many friends. I know many people who I care for and love, but there are only a few people that I consider close friends. A true friendship goes far beyond just knowing and caring for someone. A true friend is a person you feel comfortable sharing your deepest feelings with. A true friend is one who does not mind a few of your tears on their shoulder.

Since the death of my daughter, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other bereaved parents. There are far more of us than most people realize—far more than I ever realized until I became one. The grief of losing any loved one is hard to overcome. The grief of losing a child is the hardest to overcome. In fact, I dare say that we never overcome it. We simply learn to deal with it.

One of our greatest gifts as bereaved parents is close, understanding friends. Most of us find that developing friendships with other bereaved parents gives us more comfort than any other relationship. Hopefully, our friendship with our spouse will deepen and give us that comfort; but I have found that does not always happen. I am sure there are psychological reasons why bereaved husbands and wives cannot always be as comforting to each other as we wish we could, but I know it is true in many cases. Perhaps it is because we are trying so hard to be strong for each other that we hold back some of our emotions. I suppose every couple is different,

depending on their personalities and situations. The point is, very often we are not as comfortable sharing or expressing our grief with our spouse as we are with a special friend. I would really like to hear other bereaved parents' points of view and opinions about this subject.

The point of this writing is the importance of loving friendships. I have talked to so many bereaved parents who state that they just do not have anyone that they feel comfortable talking to about their grief. It is not that they do not have friends and relatives, they just don't have any that they can or will share their feelings with. They feel isolated and alone in their grief, and to me that would be unbearable. That is one of the many reasons that I am so happy to have found The Compassionate Friend's. Through T.C.F., I have met people that I consider true friends—friends that never mind a few tears on their shoulders—friends that I never mind feeling their tears on my shoulder. In my opinion, a good cry with a friend that has gone through the loss of a child—a friend who knows how it feels—is more healing than anything else I can imagine. Thank God for counselors and therapists, but without understanding friends with loving shoulders to cry on, I believe we miss out on deep, healing grief relief.

We miss our children. Our lives are forever changed without them. There is a void in our souls that nothing can fill, and in many ways we don't want it filled. But we do want relief, and true friends that don't mind our tears on their shoulders are one of our greatest sources of that relief. May the Lord lead you to that special friend, a compassionate friend, with whom you can share your deepest thoughts and feelings, one who will always offer you a shoulder to cry on when you need it. May you offer your shoulder to someone in need as well. There is blessed healing to be found with loving friends who are happy to allow tears on their shoulders.

Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry, TCF Tyler, TX



Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the “black pit” and never have the strength or courage to crawl out – because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say “ended.”

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

Renee Little, TCF Fort Collins, CO



The Writer in Me

Tom was a writer. He started writing maybe a year or so ago, and occasionally would share some of his pieces with me, his stepdad L.J., his dad, and a few close, trusted friends. The fictional works were fantasy genre, shaped by his love for the role playing games he played with his dad and the novel series he voraciously read late into the night. When I read his stories, I was amazed the words came from him. They were so interesting and vivid, grabbing me at the start, and I always wanted to keep reading after the story was over. I wondered how he could create such detailed characters and storylines. I could hear his voice and appreciate his sense of humor in the works. I found things he talked with me about showing up in his words, and wondered my impact on the final product. After we lost him, looking for something to celebrate and hold onto, I showed a few of his pieces to an English professor with whom I work. He wrote to me, “This is accomplished writing. It is impressive for someone his age.” It was good to hear it was not just a mother’s pride which saw potential in his works.

Tom told me a few months before he passed, he wrote at night because he could not sleep. I did not know the inability to sleep was a sign of depression. And even if I had, he hid any other signs so well, I am not sure we would have put the pieces together. Tom told me he would lay in bed and write and rewrite pieces in his mind until they were just right, and then he would type them up the next day. Through his non-fiction works, we have since learned writing was his way of trying to keep the depression at bay. In one of those pieces, he wrote of the darkness which comes at night. Perhaps the writing provided him light.

In contrast, other than work emails, letters, and memos, I have never been much of an author. Writing has been a large part of the administrative jobs I have held, but writing has never been an emotional outlet for me, other than some, now embarrassing teenage angst riddled poetry. In my college Drama 101 – Introduction to Theatre class, I teach a very short Introduction to Playwriting unit. A student once asked me why I had never written a play. I responded, “I have never had anything to say.”

I have heard stories of people who believe their deceased loved ones come to visit them, bringing peace, love, closure and joy. I am desperate for that experience. I long for Tom’s arms around me, even the half-way, awkward teenage boy hug, letting me know he is alright, and that he is still a presence on this plain, somewhere nearby, not permanently, physically removed from my daily life. I yearn to hear his voice; I ache to see the mischievous sparkle in his eyes once again.

Why is it I am now compelled to write and share what I am experiencing? A woman with nothing to say, who suddenly, cannot type fast enough to release all of the words swirling around

in my head. A woman living her grief publicly in hopes others will find comfort on their own grief journeys. So maybe Tom is here with me after all, now The Writer in Me, and we are one, his soul enabling my fingers to transfer my pain into words. Perhaps when I am writing, I am closer to him than I have ever been.

by: Kimberly Starr
June 2, 2016

TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son Tom



Grandparents Remembrance:

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey
TCF Rutland, VT

Grandparents Day is Sunday, September 11th. Please remember those Grandparents that have lost a grandchild and/or have lost their own child.



**Faith is taking the first step
even when you don't see the
whole staircase.**

-Martin Luther King Jr.

Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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